DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 438 638 EC 307 660

AUTHOR	Wallace, Teri; Bernhardt, Jolana; Utermarck, Jennifer
TITLE	Minnesota Paraprofessional Guide.
INSTITUTION	Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis. Inst. on Community Integration.
SPONS AGENCY	Minnesota State Dept. of Children, Families, and Learning, St. Paul.
PUB DATE	1999-11-00
NOTE	103p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Publications Office, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr., SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455 ($8). Tel: 612-624-4512; Web site: http://ici.umn.edu/products/resourceguides.html.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Credentials; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Inclusive Schools; *Minimum Competencies; *Paraprofessional School Personnel; *Professional Development; Qualifications; Standards; *Supervision, Teacher Role; Teamwork
IDENTIFIERS	*Minnesota

ABSTRACT

This guide was developed to provide teachers, related service personnel, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other individuals charged with assisting in the development of Minnesota's paraprofessional workforce, with information and strategies to build strong, effective, supportive teams to ensure successful educational services for all students. It begins by discussing the evolving role of paraprofessionals as instructional supports and key members of the educational team. Federal and state legislation relating to paraprofessionals is reviewed and characteristics of Minnesota paraprofessionals are highlighted. The guide then includes sections that address: (1) the six guiding principles of Minnesota paraprofessionals; (2) the roles of educational team members working with paraprofessionals; (3) paraprofessional competencies, including competencies relating to: understanding special education, characteristics of learners, assessment and diagnosis, instructional content and practice, supporting the teaching and learning environments, managing student behavior, communicating and collaborative partnerships, and professionalism and ethical practices; (4) competencies for individuals who direct the work of paraprofessionals; and (5) creating an Individualized Professional Development Plan. Appendices include core competencies and specialized competencies for Minnesota paraprofessionals, a core paraprofessional skills inventory, a specialized paraprofessional skills inventory, a support assistant work plan request, a job description worksheet, and an Individualized Professional Development Plan. (Contains 12 references.) (CR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 438 638

Minnesota Paraprofessional Guide

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Bruininks
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
1

Teri Wallace
Jolana Bernhardt
Jennifer Utermarck

Minnesota Paraprofessional Project
Institute on Community Integration (UAP)

The College of Education & Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF
Children, Families & Learning

EC 307660

Minnesota Paraprofessional Guide

Teri Wallace
Jolana Bernhardt
Jennifer Utermarck

Minnesota Paraprofessional Project

Institute on Community Integration (UAP)
The College of Education & Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF
Children, Families & Learning

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Published November, 1999.

Prepared by Teri Wallace, Jolana Bernhardt, and Jennifer Utermarck, of the *Minnesota Paraprofessional Project*, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota.

Guidance provided by Barbara Jo Stahl, Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning; and Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium members.

Production of this document was supported in part by the Minnesota Paraprofessional Project (Grant Number #84.027A) awarded by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning to the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. This document does not necessarily reflect the views of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, the Institute on Community Integration or the University of Minnesota, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

For additional copies or alternative formats contact —

Publications Office
Institute on Community Integration
University of Minnesota
109 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Dr. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
(612)624-4512

ici2.umn.edu/para/ (Web)

Contents

1 Introduction

11 Section 1: Guiding Principles of Minnesota Paraprofessionals

19 Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities of Educational Team Members Working With Paraprofessionals

25 Section 3: Paraprofessional Competencies

35 Section 4: Competencies for Individuals Who Direct the Work of Paraprofessionals

41 Section 5: Creating an Individualized Professional Development Plan

53 Resources

55 References

57 Appendix A: Core Competencies for Minnesota Paraprofessionals

65 Appendix B: Specialized Competencies for Minnesota Paraprofessionals

73 Appendix C: Paraprofessional Skills Inventory (Core)

93 Appendix D: Paraprofessional Skills Inventory (Specialized)

99 Appendix E: Support Assistant Work Plan Request

105 Appendix F: Job Description Worksheet

107 Appendix G: Individualized Professional Development Plan

Introduction

We believe that the climate and quality of a school and the success of its students is greatly affected by the relationships among the adults who work in and run the school. This idea is the basis of the *Minnesota Paraprofessional Guide*. This guide was developed to provide teachers, related service personnel, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other individuals charged with assisting in the development of Minnesota's paraprofessional workforce with information and strategies to build strong, effective, supportive teams to ensure successful educational services for all students. In addition, we hope that the information contained in this guide will help create systems of training and support to further enhance Minnesota's paraprofessional workforce.

Historical Context

The role of paraprofessionals as instructional supports and key members of the educational team does not have a long history. Although they number more than 700,000 today, as recently as 1965 there were fewer than 10,000. As their numbers have increased, their roles have changed and expanded. Several events and trends have caused policymakers, educators, and others to reassess the role of the paraprofessional workforce, including —

- Changing policies at state and federal levels;
- Increasing focus on including youth with disabilities in general education classrooms;
- Expanding focus on providing supports for school-to-work transition;
- Ongoing shortages of teachers and related services personnel;
- Changing and expanding roles of professionals as classroom and program managers;
- Other national, state and local influences. (Pickett & Gerlach, 1997)

There are many factors that have contributed to the increased employment of paraprofessionals, but perhaps the most significant are the initiatives to reshape and redefine teacher roles. No matter whether they work in early childhood home- or center-based programs, or in elementary, middle or senior high school general, compensatory, and special education programs, teacher roles and responsibilities in the instructional process are similar. Teachers are diagnosticians of learner needs, planners of appropriate lessons and learning strategies, facilitators of learning, and assessors of learner performance. Current efforts to reform education practices have added new dimensions to these traditionally recognized teacher responsibilities. Increasingly, teachers participate in school-based governance and decision making. They help determine how best to allocate human and fiscal resources to meet student needs, assist in the development of curriculum content and activities, and as members of education and related services teams they collaborate with other

school professionals, students, and parents to establish and implement learner goals and objectives.

To help teachers effectively carry out these new responsibilities, policymakers have turned to paraprofessionals to support and expand the program management and administrative functions of teachers. As a result, teachers have also become front-line managers with growing responsibility for directing the work of paraprofessionals.

The evolution in the roles of teachers has had a profound impact on paraprofessional roles. In fact, the roles of paraprofessionals have changed dramatically since they were introduced into classrooms almost 40 years ago. In today's schools, they are members of educational teams supporting student learning. While they may still perform routine clerical and administrative tasks, prepare materials, and monitor students in non-academic settings such as lunchrooms, study halls, and playgrounds, paraprofessionals are now active participants in all components of the instructional process. Under the direction and guidance of teachers and other professionals, paraprofessionals perform functional and other assessment activities, observe and document data on learner performance and behavior, carry out behavior management programs, instruct individuals and small groups of learners, and assist teachers with modifying programs to meet the needs of individual learners.

"While all of these issues and concerns have contributed to a renewed interest in employing paraprofessionals to work alongside school professionals, the evolution of school professionals' roles from providers of direct services to program managers is one of the most significant but underrecognized reasons for increased reliance on paraprofessionals."

Pickett, A. L. & Gerlach, K. (1997). *Supervising paraeducators in school settings: A team approach*. p.10-11. Austin, TX: PRO-ED, Inc.

Federal and State Legislation

As noted earlier, the role of paraprofessionals in educational environments has changed dramatically over the past several years. The increased use in recent years of educational paraprofessionals is due to federal legislation such as Chapter 1 of the Improving America Schools Act (IASA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (P.L. 101-457) of 1990 commonly referred to as IDEA. The legislation emphasized the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular classroom and community environments, and increased the need for and use of paraprofessionals.

More recently, Goals 2000, the Educate America Act (1994), provides a framework for developing standards and systems for improving the quality of education for *all* children and youth. In order to achieve national education goals set for the year 2000, the act stresses the need to provide members of the teaching force (including paraprofessionals) with opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare America's students for living and working in the next century. These goals are also emphasized and supported by provisions in the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (or IDEA), the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that expanded Title I services, the Bilingual Education Act, and other federal

legislative actions. In fact, the need for states and locales to provide paraprofessional training and professional development are specified in these acts.

Minnesota has established its own legislation, the State of Minnesota Omnibus Education Bill of 1998 — Article 2, Section 9, which says the following —

> (b) For paraprofessionals employed to work in programs for students with disabilities, the school board in each district shall ensure that —
>
> 1. before or immediately upon employment, each paraprofessional develops sufficient knowledge and skills in emergency procedures, building orientation, roles and responsibilities, confidentiality, vulnerability, and reportability, among other things, to begin meeting the needs of the students with whom the paraprofessional works;
> 2. annual training opportunities are available to enable the paraprofessional to continue to further develop the knowledge and skills that are specific to the students with whom the paraprofessional works, including understanding disabilities, following lesson plans, and implementing follow-up instructional procedures and activities; and
> 3. a district wide process obligates each paraprofessional to work under the ongoing direction of a licensed teacher and, where appropriate and possible, the supervision of a school nurse.

There has already been tremendous response to this legislation but there is much more to do. We hope that the *Minnesota Paraprofessional Guide* will provide useful information and tools to assist in fulfilling these legislative expectations.

Minnesota's Paraprofessional Workforce

The Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning through the Division of Special Education has conducted two statewide needs assessments related to paraprofessionals, one in 1994 and another in 1997. Needs assessments addressing paraprofessionals will occur every three years. The findings from these surveys are useful in understanding the various aspects of our Minnesota paraprofessional workforce. Some highlights from the survey results are presented below.

Special Education Paraprofessionals

Historically, the number of full time equivalent (FTE) special education teachers has increased each year, but for the first time in Fiscal Year (FY) 1997, the number decreased. At the same time, the FTE count for special education paraprofessionals increased 34% from 1992 to 1996 and continued the trend in FY 1997. This results in a composite increase of 38% from FY 1992 to FY 1997. The data implies a trend where paraprofessionals with limited or no training are gradually but steadily replacing specially trained special education teachers.

The number of FTE special education teachers increased 15% from FY 1992, when Minnesota's public school districts employed 7,785 teachers, to FY 1996 when 9,133 FTE teachers were employed. For the first time in FY 1997, the number of FTE special education teachers declined from 9,133 to 9,024 (1%). The number of FTE special education paraprofessionals steadily increased about 7–11% each year from FY 1992 when 5,061 FTE were employed to FY 1997 when 8,167 were employed. Figures 1 and 2 graphically show these changes.

Figure 1. Special Education FTE Teachers and Paraprofessionals

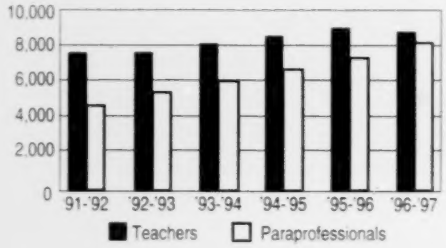
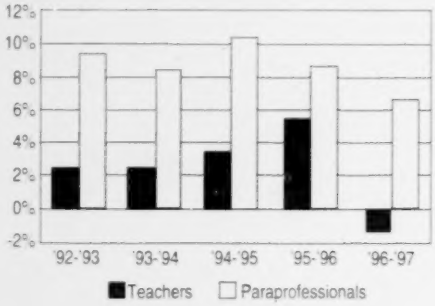


Figure 2. Percent Growth of FTE Special Education Teachers and Paraprofessionals from Prior Year



As noted earlier, statewide surveys were conducted in 1994 and 1997 as a part of Minnesota's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) to determine the staff development needs of special education paraprofessionals. In 1994, 889 paraprofessionals responded and in 1997, 945 responded. The following data is based on these two surveys.

More than 90% of the persons hired by Minnesota's public school districts as special education paraprofessionals do not have any license to teach or provide services to children (see Figure 3). Fifty-one percent reported a GED or a high school diploma as their highest level of training (see Figure 4). Figure 5 shows that not only were they not licensed, 40% reported they had no training at the time of their employment and 14% reported they had training "only at first."

Figure 3. Special Education Paraprofessionals Who Have Licenses, 1997 Survey

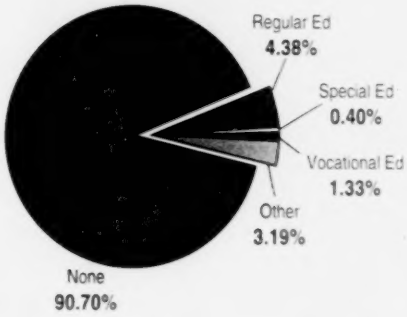


Figure 4. Special Education Paraprofessionals by Preservice Preparation, 1997 Survey

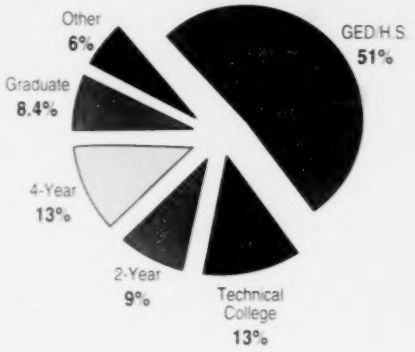
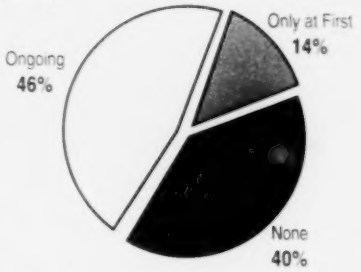
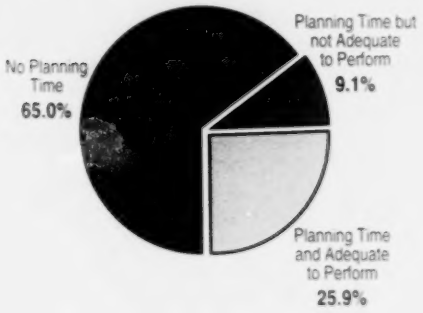


Figure 5. Special Education Paraprofessional Training at Time of Employment, 1994 Survey



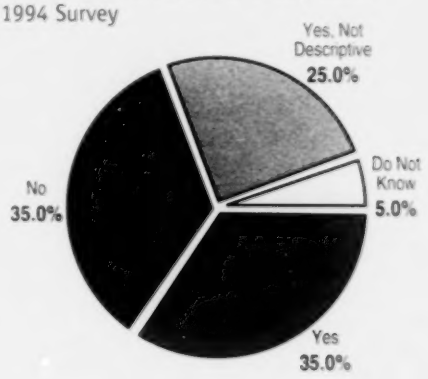
To compound this lack of training, special education paraprofessionals reported a lack of support or assistance to adequately perform their assignments with children. In the 1997 survey, 65% reported they had no planning time with licensed staff and 9.1% reported they had planning time with licensed staff but that it was not adequate to perform their assigned tasks. Only 25.9 % reported they had planning time that was adequate support to perform their assigned tasks (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Special Education Paraprofessionals Who Felt Planning Time With Licensed Staff to Perform Tasks Assigned was Not Adequate, 1997 Survey



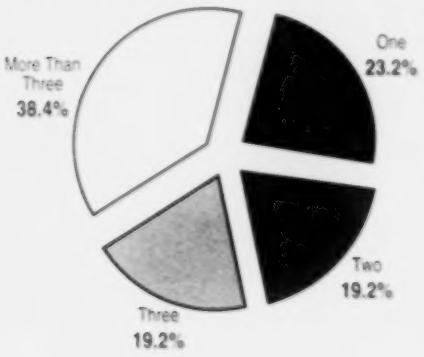
Also significant was that 35% reported they do not have written job descriptions, 25% reported they had job descriptions but that they were not descriptive enough to give direction with assigned tasks, and 5% reported they did not know if they had job descriptions. Only 35% reported they had written job descriptions sufficient to give them direction (see Figure 7). Lastly, a

Figure 7. Do Special Education Paraprofessionals Have Written Job Descriptions? 1994 Survey



lack of support can be implied when the paraprofessionals are assigned to a number of different classrooms with intermittent supervision from different licensed teachers. The 1997 survey revealed that in a typical day, 38.4% of the special educational paraprofessionals worked in more than three classrooms and 19.2% worked in three classrooms (see Figure 8).

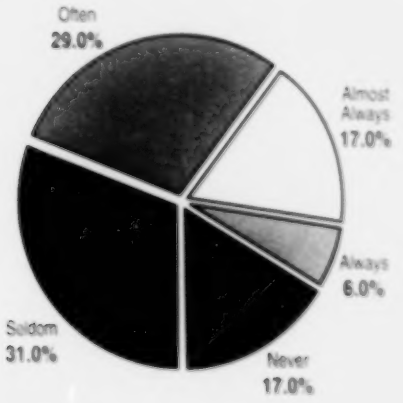
Figure 8. Number Classrooms Worked in Typical Day per Special Education Paraprofessional, 1997 Survey



The special education paraprofessionals reported that the majority of them did not have licensure, the majority did not have training, the majority did not have job descriptions and the majority did not have planning time with licensed staff to provide direction. This leads one to surmise that these paraprofessionals are functioning as teachers without the training or support to do so. The following data makes this concern even more significant.

In the 1994 survey, 29% of the paraprofessionals reported they often take full responsibility for one or more learners, 17% reported they almost always take full responsibility, and 6% reported they always take full responsibility (see Figure 9). This means that more than half (52%) take full responsibility for one or more learners who have disabilities and need special education services.

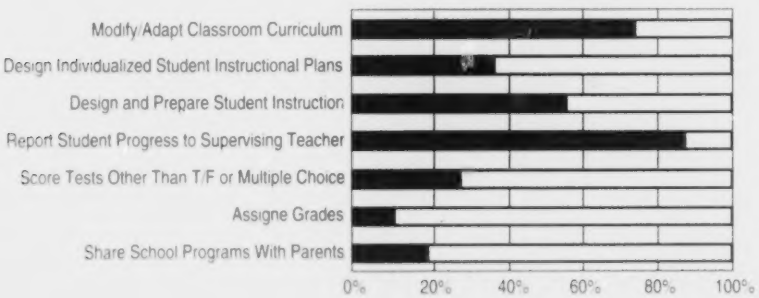
Figure 9. Do Special Education Paraprofessionals Take Full Responsibility for One or More Learners? 1994 Survey



This concern is further supported by data about typical work assignments of special education paraprofessionals. Many special education paraprofessionals have the same typical work assignments as special education teachers. Eighty-nine percent of the paraprofessionals indicated that they "report student progress to your supervising teacher(s)." Fifty-seven percent reported they "design and prepare student instructional activities." And 38% reported they "design individualized instructional plans for students" (see Figure 10).

Clearly the historical evolution of the paraprofessional role in education, recent changes in federal and state legislation, and findings from Minnesota needs assessments regarding paraprofessionals provide support for the development of a system to support this critically important workforce.

Figure 10. Special Education Paraprofessionals Typical Work Assignments, 1997 Survey



Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Consortium

The Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium, which has been in existence for 10 years, consists of nearly 40 individuals, including teachers and paraprofessionals from local school districts, and individuals from state agencies, unions, and institutions of higher education. The purpose of this consortium is to coordinate a variety of activities designed to support and enhance Minnesota's paraprofessional workforce. The consortium has set goals and developed activities to help facilitate its purpose.

Goals and Activities

The following goals and activities are intended to build a system that prepares paraprofessionals for the workforce to better contribute as team members to the changing educational environment in Minnesota —

- Create and support a well trained paraprofessional workforce in Minnesota.
- Create a vision and guiding principles for the role of paraprofessionals as valued members of the educational team.
- Develop a set of core competencies required of all paraprofessionals working in Minnesota schools.
- Develop specialized competencies for selected learning environments within Minnesota schools.
- Develop training materials to reflect the guiding principles and competencies generated in Minnesota.
- Establish the Education Track of the Community Supports Program certificate and degree program within Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU), technical and community colleges.
- Facilitate the development of a career pathway.
- Coordinate and sponsor Minnesota's Annual Statewide Paraprofessional Conference.
- Sponsor regional paraprofessional conferences.
- Support districts as they train and support paraprofessionals working in Minnesota schools.
- Develop, disseminate and provide technical assistance on the use of various tools.
- Disseminate information about research, training, resources, and useful tools to Minnesota educators, administrators, and paraprofessionals.
- Encourage and support the development of collaborative training for paraprofessionals and teachers at the local level.
- Publish and disseminate a newsletter (*ParaLink*) for paraprofessionals, educators, and administrators in the state of Minnesota.
- Establish and maintain a Website that includes training opportunities, materials, resources, tools, core and specialized competencies, and links to other Websites.

"Because of the work that the consortium does, paraprofessionals are being recognized for who they are and what they do. The statewide para conference which is sponsored by the consortium, gives paras the opportunity to network and find our what is going on elsewhere... The conference also helps pass on information. The Paralink newsletter also brings more awareness that there are others out there doing what they do."

Kathy Wente, from Ittermarck, J. (Ed.). Consortium has impact. *Paralink*, 4-5. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration.

- Present to state and national audiences about paraprofessional roles, importance, and issues, and about available resources regarding the Minnesota paraprofessional workforce.
- Study and demonstrate effective practices related to employment, support, and development of paraprofessionals as members of the educational team.
- Identify pockets of excellence and encourage replication of effective strategies and practices.
- Encourage nomination of schools using effective practices that support paraprofessionals.
- Identify the competencies needed by educators and others who direct the work of paraprofessionals.
- Conduct focus groups around the state to identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by educators who direct the work of paraprofessionals.
- Analyze the results of the focus groups to identify the competencies needed by educators.
- Provide training for educators directing the work of paraprofessionals.
- Develop and disseminate competency-based training packages to be used in preservice teacher licensure programs and as inservice training for educators directing the work of paraprofessionals.
- Support districts as they train and support educators directing the work of paraprofessionals working in Minnesota schools.
- Develop, disseminate, and provide technical assistance on the use of various tools such as hiring strategies, sample job descriptions for paraprofessionals, and orientation checklists.
- Understand the changes in the condition of the paraprofessionals workforce in Minnesota by conducting a statewide survey of paraprofessionals.
- Ensure that Minnesota educational policies and rules promote a well-trained and supported paraprofessional workforce.
- Monitor and influence educational rules and policies that impact paraprofessionals in Minnesota.

Guiding Principles of Minnesota Paraprofessionals

Development of Guiding Principles

In January, 1998, the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, through the leadership of Barbara Jo Stahl, funded a retreat consisting of more than 50 individuals (paraprofessionals, administrators, teachers, school board members, union representatives, individuals from two- and four- year education programs, and state agency staff). The retreat was designed and facilitated by Teri Wallace from the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. The goal of the retreat was to develop core competencies for all paraprofessionals working with children and youth of Minnesota.

Prior to beginning the work on these competencies, the retreat members reviewed, revised and approved a set of six guiding principles for their work. Other states have developed similar statements (Iowa, Utah, Washington and others). These guiding principles have been used by the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium; Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning; various MnSCU colleges; numerous school districts; the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota; and others in their work toward building a competent, qualified and well-supported paraprofessional workforce.

The guiding principles serve as the basis of our work. We hope that you will adopt these principles in the work you do.

Implementation Ideas for Guiding Principles

The implementation ideas presented below are suggestions about how the guiding principles may be carried out within an educational setting. These ideas reflect the values inherent in the guiding principles and were developed by reviewing literature and securing advice and input from teachers, paraprofessionals, related services personnel, administrators and others from around Minnesota.

Guiding Principle #1

"Paraprofessionals are respected and supported as integral team members responsible for assisting in the delivery of instruction and other student related activities."

Implementation ideas —

- Paraprofessionals are openly valued and recognized for their skills, talents, and expertise that contributes to student and educational team success.
- Paraprofessionals have a professional identity and their position is valued as a lifetime career.
- Paraprofessionals are provided opportunities for career development and advancement commensurate with responsibilities, experience, and training.
- Paraprofessionals are respected, valued members of the educational team and are included in relevant educational and student IEP meetings. Paraprofessional input at team meetings is valued and respected.

"A leader focuses not on her own image as a leader, but on the tone of the body of the institution."

DePree, M. (1992). *Leadership jazz.* New York: Dell Publishing, p. 28.

- Paraprofessionals have access to relevant educational and school policy information, including student IEP's, to assist in the delivery of instruction and other student related activities.
- Individuals at the state, regional, district, and building levels provide support and resources to enable paraprofessionals to be effective in their work.
- School district newsletters, inservice training, conference activities, and other communications include information for and about paraprofessionals. All such district communications are made available to paraprofessionals.
- Paraprofessionals are involved in building, leadership, advisory, and district teams and have opportunities to assume active roles in the meetings.
- Paraprofessionals are provided with release time, substitutes, and other supports needed for their participation in team meetings, training sessions, and other professional development opportunities.

Guiding Principle #2

"The entire instructional team participates within clearly defined roles in a dynamic changing environment to provide an appropriate educational program for students."

Implementation ideas —

- In developing instructional programs, district personnel have clearly defined the roles of supervisors, teachers, and paraprofessionals. Guidelines for supervision are established and implemented.
- Written, up-to-date job descriptions are provided to the paraprofessional and designated supervisor of the paraprofessional, and serve as a basis for defining specific job expectations and performance assessments.
- Regularly-scheduled staff development meetings focus on team building, and clear, open communication. Time is allotted to discuss the changing roles of members on the educational team.
- All individuals involved with a student, including parents, caregivers, educational staff, and outside service providers, are well informed of the roles and responsibilities of all educational team members. Information regarding roles and responsibilities may be included in the school handbook.
- A substitute folder is developed that provides clear information about individual paraprofessional's job responsibilities, daily activities, and assigned student needs, as well as building and classroom procedural information.

- Staff role delineation charts are developed that identify staff job responsibilities and tasks, including routine and emergency procedures.
- Paraprofessionals are not required to assume responsibilities appropriately assigned to a teacher or related services staff member, such as development of IEP goals, creating lesson plans, formally evaluating students, and substituting for the teacher or other professional staff.
- Paraprofessionals are regularly included in planning for students with whom they work, but are not responsible for developing the instructional programs of those students.

Guiding Principle #3

"To ensure quality education and safety for students and staff, paraprofessionals are provided with a district orientation and training prior to assuming those responsibilities. Ongoing training is supported for job related responsibilities."

Implementation ideas —

- The paraprofessional core and specialized competencies guide the development of appropriate paraprofessional training sessions which are then provided by districts, community colleges, universities or other appropriate agencies in areas related to specific assignments and job responsibilities.
- Paraprofessionals receive an orientation to their general and specific job responsibilities, and to district policies and procedures. District and school policy and procedure manuals, and current job descriptions, are distributed to paraprofessionals prior to the start of an assignment. Face-to-face meetings with team members, and a tour of the building are part of the orientation process.
- Learning opportunities are provided throughout the school year to increase knowledge and skills relevant to specific paraprofessional training needs. Assessments are conducted periodically to ensure that training needs are met.
- Educational resource materials, such as articles, journals, videotapes, and self-directed training guides are organized and available to paraprofessionals for independent learning.
- Paraprofessionals are encouraged to create professional development plans to meet long-term professional goals, and those plans are supported with funding and specific training opportunities provided by their districts.

"Consortium activities brought a voice that paraprofessionals didn't have before. Through the consortium's interacting with higher levels of the system — such as gaining attention in legislation — paraprofessionals are being heard. Those who support paraprofessionals can continue this effort by sharing information they learn about trainings, conferences, and other professional development opportunities."

Kathy Wente, from Utermarck, J. (Ed.). Consortium has impact. *Paraline*, 4-5. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration.

Guiding Principle #4

"Teachers and others responsible for directing the work of paraprofessionals have the skills necessary to work effectively with paraprofessionals."

Implementation ideas —

- Procedures are in place for structured, systematic management, supervision, and evaluation of paraprofessionals by designated, licensed staff, which supports the professional growth of the paraprofessional and includes opportunities for self-evaluation and input by the paraprofessional.
- Staff development opportunities and university preparation programs provide professionals with knowledge and skills to effectively direct, support and guide the work of paraprofessionals.
- Current job descriptions are used to develop clear expectations for job performance. Regularly scheduled meetings are planned to discuss team effectiveness, which provide opportunities for team members to offer constructive feedback.
- Teachers and other professional staff reflect on their leadership and management styles to increase their ability to build an effective professional-paraprofessional relationship.
- Teachers and other professional staff are provided inservice training and resources on effective ways to work with paraprofessionals.
- Teachers and other professional staff provide paraprofessionals with accurate information regarding specific student needs and update paraprofessionals regularly.
- Teachers and other professional staff are aware of the material that paraprofessionals are presented during orientation and training sessions. Ideally, professionals and paraprofessionals attend training sessions together, so they receive the same information at the same time.

Guiding Principle #5

"By recognizing paraprofessionals' training, responsibilities, experience, and skill levels, they are placed in positions for which they are qualified, which effectively and efficiently use their skills to enhance the continuity and quality of services for students."

Implementation ideas —

- Job descriptions are developed that accurately describe specific paraprofessional positions, and incorporate the core and specialized competencies. Job descriptions identify the knowledge and skills required by the paraprofessional to perform assigned duties, and provide structure for the interviewing and hiring process.

- Administrators understand the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in supporting instruction and improving student outcomes, as well as the ethical and contractual considerations in assigning paraprofessionals to appropriate and supported positions. They understand appropriate use and implementation of paraprofessional services.
- Paraprofessional input is included in hiring new staff when appropriate, especially in defining the expectations of the position and the knowledge and skills needed to perform the job effectively.
- The needs of individual students, classroom teachers, and other professional staff are considered when defining the roles and responsibilities of a specific paraprofessional position.
- Systematic tools and strategies, such as the *Paraprofessional Skills Inventory*, are used to record current level of knowledge, skill, and experience, and provide a basis for assessing paraprofessional training needs and providing training.

Guiding Principle #6

"Administrators exercise leadership by recognizing paraprofessionals as educational partners."

Implementation strategies —

- Administrators communicate regularly with community, school board, and outside educational agency members regarding the current roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals as educational partners.
- Administrators assume an active and substantive role in overseeing the participation of paraprofessionals in effective instructional programs.
- Administrators assign paraprofessionals to a program as part of an instructional team, rather than to an individual student.
- Administrators create a work schedule which provides time for regular, organized, and systematic communication and planning among the paraprofessionals and other members of the instructional team.
- Time, funding, and other resources are provided to enable paraprofessionals to participate in staff development, ongoing training, planning meetings and other opportunities for communication and professional development.

Roles and Responsibilities of Educational Team Members Working With Paraprofessionals

Development of Roles and Responsibilities

It takes many individuals in various positions to build a system to prepare and support paraprofessionals as instructional team members. Using our six guiding principles as a basis, we asked people to identify the roles and responsibilities that various individuals might have in relation to paraprofessionals.

The educational team roles and responsibilities discussed below include those of administrators, individuals who direct the work of paraprofessionals (i.e. teachers, regular and special education; occupational, physical and speech therapists, and others), and paraprofessionals. We have also included people in state education departments and institutes of higher education because the scope of the Minnesota educational system includes aspects of decision-making and teacher preparation, as well as the work that occurs in schools.

Please realize that these are ideas generated by many different people and they are intended as *suggestions* or *possibilities*. For additional ideas about reasonable expectations for teachers and paraprofessionals, please see the sections of this guide on competencies for paraprofessionals and individuals who directly work with paraprofessionals.

Team Roles and Responsibilities

All Team Members

- Work as a team to provide effective education to students. Establish positive relationships and open communication.
- Understand and respect the roles and responsibilities of other team members, and work within your job description while remaining flexible to the educational needs of students.
- Maintain confidentiality about all personal information and educational records concerning students and their families. Discuss student progress, limitations, and/or educational programming only with appropriate staff in an appropriate setting.
- Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all students, parents, and team members.
- Be a positive role model for students and other team members. Be willing to act as a mentor for new staff.
- Accept responsibility for improving your skills. Be open to constructive input on your performance.

"Because of the variety of gifts and skills that people bring to the workplace, the need for good people, and their willingness to move, we should treat the great majority of people as volunteers. They don't have to stay in one place. They don't have to work for one company or one leader. They follow someone only when she deserves it. Thus leaders and followers don't sit on parallel lines, always close but never meeting. Leaders and followers are all parts of a circle."

DePree, M. (1992). *Leadership jazz*. New York: Dell Publishing, p. 22.

School Administrators

- Ensure the development, adoption, and/or implementation of policies, procedures, and best practices that recognize the strengths and needs of paraprofessionals and support paraprofessionals as partners in providing educational services.
- Design systems that enable paraprofessionals to attend training sessions, staff development educational team meetings, and planning sessions with those individuals who direct their work.
- Ensure that a system is in place providing adequate substitute coverage that does not rely on the paraprofessional to find that coverage. Provide training opportunities for substitute paraprofessionals to ensure that those substitutes are qualified and well-prepared.
- Consider recruitment and retention strategies to attract and retain competent paraprofessionals and substitute paraprofessionals.
- Share relevant information about paraprofessional services with parents, on-site educators, school board members, local and state education representatives, and other community members.
- Ensure that teachers and other licensed personnel understand the importance of relationships in the development of successful educational teams and have adequate training and skill in working with paraprofessionals.
- Ensure that educational professionals and paraprofessionals understand the distinctions in their roles and are aware of the district policies regarding those roles. Develop accurate, current job descriptions for all staff members.
- Ensure the development of evaluation criteria and tools for assessing the performance of paraprofessionals. Establish guidelines for involving teachers and other licensed personnel in the annual performance review of paraprofessionals.
- Provide leadership in terms of professionalism, effective communication, conflict resolution, and team development.

"The best way of appearing to listen is to listen."

Marquis De Custine, from DePree, M. (1992). *Leadership jazz*, p. 29. New York: Dell Publishing.

Individuals Directing the Work of Paraprofessionals

- Understand and respect the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals and direct work accordingly. Strive to build strong, working relationships with paraprofessionals with whom you work.
- Meet with paraprofessionals regularly to provide guidance and direction in working effectively in the classroom, such as modifying educational materials for individual students, improving skills and abilities, and interacting with students. Include time to problem-solve difficult classroom situations and develop team cohesiveness.

- Promote and model good communication with students, parents, and other educational team members.
- Provide mentoring, inservice and on-the-job training, and support for paraprofessionals. Observe paraprofessionals during classroom time and provide constructive input for skill development. Document training and staff development.
- Provide resources, support, feedback, and assistance to paraprofessionals to ensure that they work effectively within the educational setting.
- Share relevant educational information about students with the paraprofessional, including medical information, IEP information and student goals, and educational, emotional, and health status of students. Encourage paraprofessionals to share observations and concerns regarding student learning and performance.
- Collaborate with educational team members to develop intervention plans, and direct paraprofessionals in implementing those plans to meet the needs of students.
- Ensure that all indirect services are being provided appropriately, effectively, and within the scope of practice through ongoing training and supervision.
- Provide input to paraprofessionals regarding their performance and assessment of skills and abilities.

Paraprofessionals

- Assist educator in maintaining learning environments that respect individual differences and engage all children and youth in learning activities.
- Establish and maintain a professional identity by advocating for paraprofessionals through positive, supportive, cooperative, and professional relationships.
- Paraprofessionals should maintain appropriate boundaries by engaging only in educational activities for which they are qualified, trained or supervised. Paraprofessionals should inform the individual directing their work of any concerns they have regarding assigned jobs.
- Refer concerns expressed by parents, students, educational staff, or others to your appropriate supervisor.

"Roles are not boundaries or limitations, but the energy to create new solutions in order to perform work better."

Wheatley, M. J. (1992). *Leadership and the new science: Learning about organizations from an orderly universe.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

State Education Department

- Provide leadership in establishing policies, developing standards, and creating systems to enhance the status, increase skills and productivity, and improve management of paraprofessionals.
- Provide local and district personnel with information to develop accurate job descriptions, competency-based staff development opportunities for paraprofessionals, and structured supervisory and evaluation procedures.

" A requirement for empowering people to reach for a future different from the past is respect for the individuals in the organization. For people to trust one another in areas of uncertainty, where outcomes are not yet known, they need to respect the competence of the others."

Kanter, R. M. (1983). *The change masters: Innovation and entrepreneurship in the American corporation*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 34.

- Provide assistance to local school districts to identify skills and knowledge needed for paraprofessional positions, determine experiential and educational requirements, and establish criteria for advancement into other positions.
- Encourage the use of core and specialized paraprofessional competencies (refer to Appendices A and B for competency statements).
- Advocate for resources for effective, relevant training opportunities for paraprofessionals and educational professionals.
- Establish statewide paraprofessional networks and advisory groups.
- Establish a system for disseminating printed materials to paraprofessionals (i.e. training announcements, newsletters, other publications, Websites).
- Offer leadership seminars for principals, supervisors, and others to discuss paraprofessional issues.

Institutes of Higher Education

- Collaborate with appropriate organizations to develop guidelines that address role distinctions among educational team members, supervision and management of paraprofessionals and other support staff, and job descriptions that identify the knowledge and skills required by paraprofessionals to perform assigned tasks.
- Collaborate with other institutes of higher education and school districts to develop and increase relevant, competency-based training and career advancement opportunities for paraprofessionals and those who supervise and direct paraprofessionals.
- Acknowledge and support the efforts of two-year colleges in preparing paraprofessionals to work in schools.
- Remain current on the expectations and needs of paraprofessionals and individuals who work with paraprofessionals.
- Strengthen and improve the quality of educational practices by preparing school professionals to direct and work effectively with paraprofessionals. Incorporate the development of skills necessary to direct the work of paraprofessionals into educational curriculum and field experiences for students becoming teachers and other educational professionals.
- Encourage life-long learning. Develop systems to enable paraprofessionals to access continuing education in order to pursue careers in education.
- Collaborate to develop policy and infrastructure to improve management, supervision and preparation of paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessional Competencies

Development of Competencies

To be competent in a job, an individual must have knowledge, skills, and abilities to sufficiently do all that is required and expected. The paraprofessional competencies are statements that indicate the knowledge and skills needed for paraprofessionals to work successfully in educational settings. The competencies have been divided into core competencies and specialized competencies. Core competencies reflect the knowledge and skills that are expected of all paraprofessionals working in Minnesota schools. Specialized competencies reflect the knowledge and skills that are expected of paraprofessionals working in specific positions (early childhood, transition to work, behavior management, academic program assistants, and physical/other health impairments).

These competencies can be used as a basis for interviewing and hiring, developing job descriptions and training programs, creating professional development plans for paraprofessionals, and assessing actual performance against that which is expected. Schools that adopt these competencies (or portions that are applicable) should work to ensure that paraprofessionals are provided with sufficient opportunities to gain these competencies. Some competencies have been identified as entry-level (upon hire or within two weeks of start date), whereas other competencies can be developed through ongoing training and learning opportunities. Refer to other sections and appendices in this guide for skill assessments, training packages/resources, and other tools that districts can use to support and train paraprofessionals.

The core competencies were adapted from those generated by the Council for Exceptional Children in 1997, and revised during Minnesota's Paraprofessional Retreat in January, 1998. The specialized competencies were developed during that same retreat. While the retreat was the strategy for initial development, the competencies have had broad-based input from Minnesota teachers, paraprofessionals, related services personnel, administrators and others. See Appendices A and B for further details regarding the core and specialized competencies.

com • pe • tent *adj* [ME, suitable, fr. MF & L; MF, fr. L *competent-, competens*, fr. prp. of *competere* to be suitable] **1:** having requisite or adequate ability or qualities **4:** having the capacity to function or develop in a particular way

com • pe • tence *n* **2:** the quality or state of being competent

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1981. Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company.

par • a [<Gr.<*para*, at the side of] *a prefix meaning*: **1.** by or at the side of **2.** *c)* like or resembling

Webster's New World Dictionary, 1982. Second Concise Edition. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Core Competency Statements

Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundations of Special Education

- Sensitivity to the beliefs, traditions, and values across cultures and the effect of the relationship among children, families, and schooling.
- Awareness of the human and legal rights and responsibilities of parents and children/youth as they relate to individual learning needs.
- Understanding of the distinctions between roles and responsibilities of professionals, paraprofessionals, and support personnel.
- Understanding of the purposes and goals of education for all individuals.
- Awareness of responsibilities in a manner consistent with the requirements of law, rules and regulations, and local district policies and procedures.
- Ability to carry out responsibilities in a manner consistent with the requirements of law, rules and regulations, and local district policies and procedures.

Characteristics of Learners

- Awareness of the similarities and differences among the cognitive, physical, communicative, social, and emotional needs of individuals with and without exceptional learning needs.
- Awareness of the effects that exceptional conditions have on an individual's life and family in the home, school, and community.
- Awareness of characteristics and effects of the cultural, linguistic, and environmental background of the child and family.
- Understanding of the effects of medications commonly prescribed for individuals with learning needs.
- Awareness of the educational implications of the above factors.

Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation

- Awareness of district's ability to provide for and use the tools of assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation.
- Ability to make and document observations appropriate to the individual with learning needs, under the direction of a professional.
- Ability to provide objective documentation of observations to appropriate professionals.

Instructional Content and Practice

- Awareness of learning styles of individuals.
- Awareness of the demands and expectations of various learning environments.
- Awareness of a variety of instructional and remedial methods, techniques, and materials.
- Ability to establish and maintain rapport with learners.
- Ability to use developmentally and age-appropriate strategies, equipment, materials and technologies, as directed, to accomplish instructional objectives.
- Ability to assist in adapting instructional strategies and materials according to the needs of the learner, under the direction of a professional.
- Ability to follow written plans, seeking clarification as needed.

Supporting the Teaching and Learning Environment

- Awareness of the environmental factors that affect teaching and learning, including health and safety issues.
- Awareness of the ways in which technology can assist teaching and learning.
- Understanding of the value of inclusion, and the strategies for facilitating the inclusion of individuals with learning needs in various settings.
- Awareness by the paraprofessional of how they impact the overall learning environment for students and staff.
- Ability to assist in maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment that includes following prescribed policy and procedures (i.e. proper hand-washing technique, emergency evacuation, universal precautions).
- Ability to prepare and organize materials to support teaching and learning as directed.
- Ability to use strategies that promote learner independence and positive self-esteem.

Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills

- Understanding of applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of behaviors of individuals.
- Understanding of ethical considerations inherent in the management of behaviors.
- Awareness of the factors that influence the behavior of individuals with learning needs.
- Awareness of the social skills needed for current and future environments.
- Awareness of effective instructional practices that enhance the development of social skills.
- Awareness of the range and implications of management approaches and strategies that influence the behavior of individuals with learning needs.

Paraprofessional: In this guide the term paraprofessional is used broadly to include individuals that fulfill important educational positions within Minnesota schools. These positions include paraprofessionals and paraeducators, instructional assistants, educational assistants, support assistants, job coaches, classroom and program aides, tutors, therapy assistants, as well as other positions that directly support the education of students.

- Understanding of the district and building behavior management plans for students.
- Demonstrate use of effective strategies for the management of behaviors.
- Ability to assist in modifying the learning environment to manage behavior.
- Ability to collect and provide objective, accurate information to professionals, as appropriate.
- Ability to use appropriate strategies and techniques in a variety of settings to assist in the development of social skills.

Communication and Collaborative Partnerships

- Awareness of typical concerns of parents of individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- Awareness of the roles of individuals with exceptional learning needs, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school and community personnel in planning an individualized program.
- Use of ethical practices for confidential communication about students with learning needs.
- Under the direction of a professional, use of constructive strategies in working with individuals with learning needs, parents, and school and community personnel in various learning environments.
- Following the instructions of the professional.
- Foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and other school and community personnel.
- Participate as requested in conferences with families or primary caregivers as members of the educational team.
- Use appropriate educational terminology regarding students, roles, and instructional activities.
- Demonstrate sensitivity to diversity in cultural heritage, lifestyles, and value systems among children, youth, and families.
- Function in a manner that demonstrates the ability to use effective problem solving, engage in flexible thinking, employ appropriate conflict management techniques, and analyze one's own personal strengths and preferences.

Professionalism and Ethical Practices

- Recognize that the paraprofessional can and should be a positive role model for all students, including individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- Demonstrate commitment to assisting learners in achieving their highest potential.
- Function in a manner that demonstrates a positive regard for the distinctions among roles and responsibilities of paraprofessional, professionals, and other support personnel.
- Function in a manner that demonstrates the ability to separate personal issues from one's responsibilities as a paraprofessional.
- Demonstrate respect for culture, religion, gender, and sexual orientation of students.
- Demonstrate willingness to participate in on-going staff development and self-evaluation, and accept and apply constructive feedback regarding job performance.
- Demonstrate proficiency in academic skills including oral and written communication.
- Practice within the context of written standards and policies of the school or agency where they are employed.

Specialized Competency Statements

These competencies were revised from those originally developed by Anna Lou Pickett of the National Resource Center on Para Education.

Early Childhood, Home Visitor Programs

- Understanding of his/her role as a member of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team responsible for developing service plans and education objectives for parents and their children.
- Understanding of his/her role in listening and communicating with parents to gather information which the service delivery team can build on to meet the needs of the child and family.
- Awareness of health care providers, social services and other resources available in the community to assist parents and their child.
- Understanding of his/her role in enhancing parent interactions with their child by using and demonstrating effective techniques and materials to stimulate cognitive, physical, social and language development.

Early Childhood, Center-Based Programs

- Awareness of basic developmental stages, ages 0-5.
- Understanding of his/her role as a member of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team responsible for developing and implementing service plans and education objectives for parents and their children.
- Ability to use developmentally appropriate instructional interventions for curriculum activities in the areas of cognitive, motor, self-help, social/play, and language development for infants and young children ages 0-5.
- Ability to gather information about the performance of individual children in all areas of development and to share it with professional colleagues.
- Demonstrate competence in preparing and using developmentally appropriate materials, under the direction of a professional.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the paraprofessional's role in communicating and working effectively with parents, other primary caregivers, and team members.

Transition to Work and Adult Life

- Understanding of the need for transition-related services.
- Awareness of how to access information on community resources available to the individual with disabilities of transition age and his or her family.
- Understanding of the importance of interagency collaboration.
- Knowledge of the ethical and legal standards of conduct in relationships with students, parents, adult service providers, employers, and co-workers.
- Understanding of transition related assessment strategies and ability to provide team with information useful to the development of transition related goals and objectives.
- Ability to facilitate and support student involvement in decision-making.
- Ability to identify and develop accommodations and natural supports in the work setting.
- Knowledge of and ability to provide instruction and support in leisure skills, social skills, self-determination skills, community mobility skills, and independent living skills.
- Ability to provide instruction and support in work-related behaviors, job seeking skills, and job specific skills in school or at a community work site (Wallace, 1997).

Behavior Management

- Understanding of personality and social/emotional development.
- Understanding of behavioral/emotional challenges and the interaction with other disabilities.
- Understanding of the need for utilizing formal and informal assessment strategies in obtaining information necessary for educational and behavioral programming for individual students.
- Understanding of the rationale, components, operation and evaluation of the program models in which they are working.
- Ability to document change in learner behavior in both academic and social areas.
- Ability to observe and record pupil behavior utilizing different social rating systems.
- Demonstrate the use of different methods to change and maintain behavior.
- Ability to implement remedial techniques in academic skill areas with learners.
- Ability to use materials designed for skill development in the social areas.
- Ability to collaborate effectively with team members.

Academic Program Assistants

- Knowledge of the paraprofessional's role and function in the specific academic setting.
- Awareness of Minnesota Graduation Standards, including state testing and high standards as outlined in student IEPs.
- Awareness of factors which influence cognitive, social, emotional and physical development.
- Knowledge of educational terminology related to specific program or age level.
- Ability to instruct students in academic subjects using lesson plans and instructional strategies developed by teachers and other professional staff.
- Ability to gather and record data about the performance and behavior of individual students.
- Ability to confer with special and general education practitioners about individual student schedules, instructional goals, progress, and performance.
- Ability to use developmental and age-appropriate instructional methods and reinforcement techniques.
- Ability to effectively use available instructional resources including technology, as directed by the professional.
- Understanding of various learning styles and the ability to implement corresponding teaching methods.
- Demonstrate techniques to include students in general education as outlined in IEPs.

Physical and Other Health Impairments

- Understanding of specific student environments and learning modification and accommodation strategies.
- Understanding of medical conditions and emergency procedures for specific students, including seizures, latex allergies, catheterizations, tracheostomies, gastrostomies and ventilators.
- Understanding of proper storage, documentation, administration and side effects of specific student medications (specific training is required to administer medication).
- Awareness of specific student transportation issues and emergency evacuation procedures.
- Awareness of legal and liability issues specific to vulnerable and medically fragile students.
- Demonstrate competence in the use of proper body mechanics for self and specific student when transferring, lifting and positioning that student.
- Demonstrate competence in implementation, safety and maintenance of all necessary adaptive, assistive and instructional technology and equipment.
- Certification in age appropriate CPR (infant and child, adult) and Basic First Aid, and the ability to respond appropriately during an emergency situation.
- Ability to properly assist students with activities of daily living, including toileting, feeding, dressing and mobility.
- Ability to implement strategies that encourage student independence and participation in all areas of development and classroom learning.

Competencies for Individuals Who Direct the Work of Paraprofessionals

Development of Competencies

Recent changes in IDEA focusing on the role of paraprofessionals in providing special education services have placed a renewed emphasis on understanding the role of paraprofessionals and the development of systems for preparing and supporting paraprofessionals in their emerging roles. While the role of the paraprofessional is clearly important, it must be defined within the context of the changing role of teachers, both in special and regular education.

We conducted focus groups of administrators, paraprofessionals and teachers. We used a modified "**D**eveloping **A C**urricu**lum**" (DACUM) process to gather information about what teachers do and/or should do to direct the work of paraprofessionals in light of our guiding principles. Upon analyzing and summarizing the information and constructing competency statements, we developed a validation survey to gather statewide information on the competencies. We are currently in the process of analyzing the results of this survey. A preliminary review of the results indicated that administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals alike consider these competency statements to be important in directing the work of paraprofessionals. Although we do not have our final analysis available at this time, we have included the statements to provide you with a set of ideas to use as you consider ways to improve the provision of educational services within your school and/or district.

The competencies for individuals who direct the work of paraprofessionals are statements that indicate the knowledge and skills needed for professionals to successfully work with paraprofessionals in educational settings. Directing the work of paraprofessionals includes instructional supervision, guidance, collaboration, training, support, advocacy, teamwork and providing feedback. The competencies have been divided into the following areas: communication, instructional support, modeling, planning and scheduling, public relations, administration and management, and training. The purpose of these competencies is to provide a list of skills needed to successfully direct the work of paraprofessionals. These can be used to develop training programs for individuals who direct paraprofessionals. Please check our Website for a summary of the findings from our validation survey.

"Any follower has a right to ask many things of her leader. Here are several questions that leaders should expect to hear:

- What may I expect from you?
- Can I achieve my own goals by following you?
- Will I reach my potential by working with you?
- Can I trust my future to you?
- Have you bothered to prepare yourself for leadership?
- Are you ready to be ruthlessly honest?
- Do you have the self-confidence and trust to let me do my job?
- What do you believe?"

DePree, M. (1992). *Leadership jazz.* New York: Dell Publishing, p. 24.

Competency Statements

Communication

The professional directing the work of paraprofessionals —

- Communicates with paraprofessionals in a clear, receptive and responsive manner.
- Provides clear daily direction in coordinating plans, schedules, and tasks.
- Informs and updates paraprofessionals regarding student information, such as assessment results, behavioral changes, medications, and other factors that may influence the work of the paraprofessional.
- Provides regular opportunities for staff communication, group discussion, and collaboration.
- Assists paraprofessionals in clarifying their roles and responsibilities to other staff, parents, and volunteers.

Instructional Support

The professional directing the work of paraprofessionals —

- Provides regular, constructive feedback regarding each paraprofessional's work performance.
- Encourages the involvement of paraprofessionals in setting goals, and on planning, implementing, and evaluating program and instructional activities.
- Coordinates collaboration among paraprofessionals and other staff.
- Efficiently manages resources related to student instruction, such as instructional materials, physical space, and personnel.
- Supports paraprofessionals in using modified instructional plans and materials to accommodate the exceptional learning needs of various students.
- Provides assistance and direction for paraprofessionals who work independently in the classroom, and in areas such as job mentoring, community transition support, work study, and transportation.

Modeling

The professional directing the work of paraprofessionals —

- Models a caring and respectful manner when interacting with students.
- Models behavior that is trustworthy, cooperative, and active in school-wide programs.
- Models respect, patience, and persistence in carrying out educational objectives.

Planning and Scheduling

The professional directing the work of paraprofessionals —

- Establishes goals and detailed plans around which activities of paraprofessional are coordinated.
- Organizes and manages schedules that allow for cooperation, planning, and information sharing.

- Considers the strengths, interests, and needs of paraprofessional when managing schedules.
- Manages smooth transitions brought on by changes to the daily schedules of paraprofessionals.
- Organizes and provides materials and resources that are necessary to carry out the objectives of each paraprofessional activity.

Public Relations

The professional directing the work of paraprofessionals —

- Informs administrators, teachers, and parents of the responsibilities and roles paraprofessionals have in the educational program.
- Advocates for the paraprofessional regarding training and leave time, modifications in responsibility, involvement in decision groups, and other issues.

Administration and Management

The professional directing the work of paraprofessionals —

- Clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of individual paraprofessionals.
- Maintains regular positive and supportive interaction with paraprofessionals.
- Contributes to the evaluation of paraprofessional performance with the intent of assisting paraprofessional skill improvement.
- Maintains professionalism through respect, confidentiality, and honoring boundaries.
- Provides beginning and substitute paraprofessionals with an orientation that results in sufficient understanding of the setting, staff, students, and staff roles and responsibilities.

Training

The professional directing the work of paraprofessionals —

- Provides on-the-job training opportunities for paraprofessional skill development.
- Educates paraprofessionals on the legal rights and responsibilities regarding student interaction, services, and instructional programming.
- Advocates for school and district to provide inservice training opportunities that are directly related to the daily work of paraprofessionals.
- Advocates for the school and district to offer paraprofessionals basic training in current issues and strategies related to teaching students with disabilities.

Creating an Individualized Professional Development Plan

Importance of Development Plan

An individualized professional development plan can be a way for paraprofessionals to record job-related competencies and training. It can help identify areas in which a paraprofessional needs more training and/or education to be competent. It can help focus the paraprofessional's career path by providing a structure for exploring interests and talents related to his/her job. There are many components related to professional growth and development. Figure 1 provides a graphic depiction of the process. Key concepts are listed for each component followed by further description and an example.

Determination of Need for Paraprofessional

- Use student needs to determine need for paraprofessionals.
- Integrate and coordinate the paraprofessional role with other roles within school, program, or classroom.

Job Description

- Define the roles and responsibilities of the position.
- Identify necessary competencies and essential job functions.
- Use in the hiring process.

Figure 1. Flow Chart

"Development in a career can occur randomly, or purposefully through personal choices guided by on-the-job-training, continuing education, and involvement in structured programs such as advanced education and specialty certification. Effective organizations include career development in their personnel practices because it ensures the presence of requisite skills in the workforce, helps provide equal opportunities for persons with diverse backgrounds, and aids in both recruitment and retention of competent personnel."

Crist, P. (1996). "Roles, relationships, and career development" (Chapter 11, pp. 327-391). *The occupational therapy manager.* (1996). Margo Johnson (Ed.). American Occupational Therapy Association, Bethesda, MD.

Orientation

- Introduce new paraprofessionals to educational team, school, and district.
- Provide a basis for successful transition into the new position.

Skills Inventory

- Document current competency level in all areas.
- Use to plan training opportunities.

Ongoing Training

- Use to increase paraprofessional competency level.
- Make information about various opportunities available —
  - inservice
  - self-directed learning (independent)
  - on-the job training
  - 2- and 4-year programs

Application of New Knowledge and Skills

- Provide opportunities for paraprofessionals to apply new knowledge in educational setting.
- Supplement learning with on-the-job training and mentoring.
- Allow time for paraprofessionals to master new knowledge and readily apply that knowledge within the educational setting.

Supervision and Feedback

- Provide constructive feedback and encouragement regarding job performance.
- Provide feedback on application of new knowledge to increase competency level.

Further Skill Development

- Provide further training as needed in specific competency area in addition to previous training, based on individual learning style and content area.
- Encourage decisions regarding further training to be made by paraprofessionals.

Integration of Knowledge and Feedback

- Allow time to fully integrate new knowledge and feedback.
- Allow time to apply new knowledge daily in the educational setting.

Increased Level of Competency

- Update *Paraprofessional Skills Inventory* regularly to reflect current level of competence.
- Use to determine the next step in skill development.

Performance Assessment or Evaluation

- Use formal and informal assessment of job performance to provide paraprofessional with important information regarding skills and abilities.
- Use assessments to recommend further skill development.

Professional Development Process

The process of professional development is ongoing. The *Paraprofessional Skills Inventory* can be used in combination with a current job description, performance feedback from supervisors and colleagues, individual interests, and a career plan to identify areas of need and to provide a basis for pursuing further training and education. This is a comprehensive way to identify the areas in which there is a need for knowledge, training, supervision or experience. Once the essential competencies of a position have been mastered, this process can be used to guide decisions regarding further professional development.

Determining the Need for a Paraprofessional

The need for professional support from a paraprofessional should be based on the specific needs of an individual student. The support and services of a paraprofessional should be integrated and coordinated within the school, program, and classroom(s) in which they work. Rum River Special Education Cooperative has developed a process and forms (see Appendix E) for special education teams to use when determining whether or not a special education paraprofessional should be hired. Some things to consider when determining the need for a paraprofessional are identified below —

- Paraprofessionals are hired on the basis of need. Attempts to meet the need before considering a paraprofessional should be documented. Use consultants and schedule changes, and implement curriculum and equipment modifications first. Complete assessments to identify student's strengths and needs. Include all appropriate disciplines. Ask the following questions —
  - What specific task(s) does the student need help with?
  - How frequently do they occur?
  - Is there already someone in the building that can accomplish the task?
  - What tasks should the student be trained to do independently?
  - How should the training occur?
  - Can help be given by another student?
- Team members should be included in a review of the assessments, and in the decision-making process.
- The team should specify the exact roles, duties, and activities of the paraprofessional and include them in part G (adaptations in general and special education) on the IEP.

Responsibilities that paraprofessionals may be asked to do include (but are not limited to):

- Assist with functional assessment activities
- Observe and record information about student performance and behavior
- Assist with instruction to individuals and small groups
- Provide opportunities for students to practice skills in classroom and community settings
- Assist with the implementation of behavior management programs

- Specify the paraprofessional's supervisor and the teacher or other professional who will direct the work. Also specify the nature and frequency of contact between the paraprofessional and teacher. Establish an evaluation policy and procedure.
- Consider at each staffing —
  - Does the paraprofessional need to be with the student during all parts of the day for all activities and in all environments? Designate environments and activities for student's independent functioning and assign the paraprofessional other classroom/ school duties, breaks, lunches, etc.
  - Could the student become dependent on the paraprofessional? Does this conflict with the goal of becoming independent? Plan for ways to decrease dependence.
  - What is the target date for the student to function independently without the support of a paraprofessional?

Developing Job Descriptions

When developing job descriptions, keep in mind the roles and responsibilities of the position, and the competencies needed to fill the position successfully. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association (1993, pp. 1087-88), the following information should be included in a job description —

- Clear description of the primary purpose(s) of the role.
- Range of responsibility and complexity that typically occurs within the role.
- Common activities and expectations associated with the role.
- Supervision required or recommended for individual in the role.
- Credentials, education and work experience necessary to adequately perform the role.

In addition to the information above, Pickett and Gerlach (1997) recommend also including the following information —

- Position title.
- Position setting.
- Orientation and training requirements.
- Hours of employment.
- Evaluation and supervision methods.

Once a job description has been written, Pickett and Gerlach (1997) suggest using the questions below to evaluate the scope of information included in that job description —

- Is the title appropriate and reflective of current trends in paraprofessional employment?
- Does the job description include enough detail about expectations for the position, including what the paraprofessional will be doing?
- Does the job description reflect what paraprofessionals are currently doing?
- Are the expectations and demands of the position too high or too low?
- Is the professional-paraprofessional relationship accurately described with sufficient detail? Are other pertinent staff relationships described?
- Are the paraprofessional's responsibilities to students adequately described? Are limits to authority identified?
- Does the supervision section adequately describe how the paraprofessional will be directed and supervised?
- Does the job description provide direction for the development of paraprofessional training programs? Are on-the-job training goals identified?
- Does the description allow for the paraprofessional to plan for and participate in the evaluation process? Is information included on the methods of evaluation of the paraprofessional? (Pickett & Gerlach, 1997)

This is a good way to ensure that the job description reflects the position accurately, and can be used in the hiring process. It is also useful for a potential employee to know what the demands of the job really are, and to make an informed decision about taking the position if offered. In the long run, an accurate job description can be one of the primary tools to successfully fill a position with a qualified person who understands the scope and expectations of the position, and is willing and able to do the work competently. Refer to Appendix F for a job description worksheet.

Orientation

In order to acclimate to a new work environment, paraprofessionals should participate in an orientation that introduces them to the educational team, other school staff members, the educational setting, as well as the building layout and basic school procedures. Depending on the setting, it may be possible to provide general orientation to all new employees (not just paraprofessionals), and then break the orientation into more specific job roles. Some districts assign an experienced paraprofessional (or other professional) to new paraprofessionals to serve as a mentor. This is one way to provide paraprofessionals with a specific person to go to for questions and concerns during the early stages of new employment, as well as to provide a way for the new paraprofessional to meet people and learn general program information (i.e. time cards, breaks, building layout, dress codes). Programs may sched-

ule several meetings during the first few months of a new school year to address questions and concerns as they arise, once the new paraprofessionals are working with students.

The following topics are ideas to help structure paraprofessional orientation. Please refer to the core and specialized competencies, (see appendices A and B) as these identify areas that can be presented during an orientation period —

- Values and beliefs of the educational setting
- Roles and responsibilities of educational team members
- Policies and procedures of the school district
- Federal and state legislation that affects the educational setting
- Health and safety procedures for staff and students
- Educational and behavioral strategies
- Available educational materials and resources

Rum River Special Education Cooperative has developed an orientation manual for all new paraprofessionals. The following topics are based on the information and materials contained in that manual —

- Legal, health and safety policies and procedures including universal precautions, confidentiality, vulnerable individuals, mandatory reporting, harassment, emergency procedures.
- District policies and procedures including time cards, pay periods, holidays, sick leave, personal days, substitutes, breaks, dress code, inservice hours, insurance
- Educational team members and other school personnel including names, areas in which they work, contact information, chain of command.
- Paraprofessional responsibilities to specific students.
- Student specific information including diagnoses, goals and objectives, behavior plans, accommodations, technology, communication systems, reading materials on disabilities of specific students .
- Building layout including map, location of exits, restrooms, break rooms, offices, parking.
- Union information.
- Job description.
- Evaluation process.

It is also helpful to keep a paraprofessional notebook in each classroom. This notebook should contain information that is related to the daily activities of each individual classroom and paraprofessional role. This is a helpful guide for new paraprofessionals and substitutes alike, in that it provides concrete information about the daily procedures of each classroom. The following ideas are suggestions for the type of information that could be found in a paraprofessional notebook (keep in a locked place if it contains confidential student information) —

- Names of educational team members and general role in classroom (for some classrooms it may be helpful to identify what days or times team members are present).
- Daily and/or weekly schedule (depending on program, it may be for the classroom, student, or paraprofessional).
- Student names, primary needs, individual strategies and any special instructions.
- Student goals and objectives
- Description, location and use of instructional materials.
- Primary roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals.
- Current job description.
- Key legal, ethical and educational policies and procedures.
- Emergency procedures (i.e. medical emergencies, fire drills, severe weather and tornado drills).

Self-assessment

Self-assessment is done by reflecting on personal and professional strengths, weaknesses, goals, and professional development needs. Colleagues can offer insight into a person's skills and talents, and how these attributes fit into professional development and career or goal planning.

The *Paraprofessional Skills Inventory* (see Appendices C and D) can be used as a tool for self-assessment and professional development using the core and specialized competencies. Additional competencies can be added or substituted to fit the needs of the individuals using the tool and the settings in which they work. This inventory is designed to guide the development of paraprofessionals. Rather than being used only once, this inventory is meant to be used as an ongoing record of paraprofessional development and preparation. It should be completed at least once a year, at the beginning of the school term, and then updated regularly to accurately reflect trainings, inservices, continuing education courses and on-the-job experiences. The ideas below are suggestions on ways to specifically use the *Paraprofessional Skills Inventory*.

Professional Development —

- Use to maintain a record of your professional development throughout the year.
- Use to determine areas where you want greater skill, and then seek out training and experiences in those areas to increase your level of competency.
- Use as a record of your skill and experience to assist you when requesting a change in position or setting.
- Use as a record of your areas of interest and skill to help guide further career development. This record can help direct you into a career area that fits your skills and interests.

"Successful career development is planned...Careful self-assessment of readiness for a role is essential.... Managers can be excellent resources for staff members, encouraging and modeling appropriate preparation for role enhancement or change in annual negotiations of job goals or during supervisory sessions... Excellent role development means excellent job performance, quality service, and even career mobility."

Crist, P. (1996). "Roles, relationships, and career development" (Chapter 11, pp. 327-391). *The occupational therapy manager*. (1996). Margo Johnson (Ed.). American Occupational Therapy Association, Bethesda, MD.

Administration and Management of Paraprofessional Workforce —

- Ask new paraprofessionals to complete upon hire to gain an understanding of their current level of competency.
- Use to develop training and inservice programs to specifically target areas of common need across paraprofessionals in your school or district.
- Use as a record of paraprofessional development to ensure that paraprofessionals are placed in settings where they are competent.
- Use as a record of paraprofessional development to guide peer training and mentoring. Utilize the skills of experienced paraprofessionals to increase the level of competency with less experienced paraprofessionals.

Ongoing Professional Development Plan

Here is an example of how the development of one competency can be recorded over time. A record of such development should be kept by the paraprofessional and might be shared with teachers, supervisors and administrators. Please note that the development of competencies occurs over time, and that various members of the educational team play different roles in that development. The development of a competent workforce depends in part on the ongoing assessment and preparation of paraprofessionals, as well as the efforts of educational team members.

Timeline
1999 - 2000 School Year

Core Competency Statement
(found in Appendix A, Section 5: Supporting the Teaching and Learning Environment)
Understanding of the value of inclusion, and the strategies for facilitating the inclusion of individuals with learning needs in various settings.

Job Responsibilities
(found in specific job description, see Appendix F for worksheet)

- Paraprofessional will assist teacher in the inclusion of special needs students into the regular education classroom.
- Paraprofessional will assist students with special needs on the playground and in gym class so they can participate in recreational activities to their fullest ability.

Paraprofessional Skills Inventory
(Figure 2, from Appendix C, completed independently by paraprofessional upon hire, September 1999)

Professional Development Plan
(Figure 3, from Appendix G, completed by paraprofessional after team meeting addressing training issues, October 1999)

Paraprofessional Skills Inventory
(Figure 4, from Appendix C, completed by paraprofessional after informal discussion with team members regarding this competency, June 2000 or September 2000)

Figure 2. Paraprofessional's Self-Assessment of Competence on K# (September, 1999)

K3 Understanding of the value of inclusion, and the strategies and techniques for facilitating the inclusion of individuals with learning needs into various settings.

1 unprepared | (2) beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

I participated in a three-hour training session on how to encourage children with physical disabilities to play with peers in various settings. This training emphasized socialization. I need more training on how to help kids talk to other kids and how to help kids get around on the playground.

Figure 3. Paraprofessional's Professional Development Plan for K3

Development area *Value of inclusion, and strategies for facilitating the inclusion of kids with special needs into various settings.*

Current competency level *2* Desired competency level *4* Competency level 6 months after training _____

Professional development activity	Person(s) responsible	Start date	Completion date
Work with the special education teacher, occupational therapist, and speech pathologist to develop a list of specific strategies for including students in classroom, gym and on the playground. Work under the supervision of these people to learn how to best implement these strategies. Observe others implementing strategies, especially other paraprofessionals with more experience.	*Paraprofessional Special Ed. Teacher* *Occupational Therapist Speech Pathologist*	*Nov. 1999*	*Dec. 1999 (for list of strategies)* *June 2000 (for learning how to implement and gaining skills to do so)*

On-going plan for continued development

Participate in inservice training during school year and meet with educational team on a regular basis to discuss my questions, concerns and progress.

Figure 4. Paraprofessional's Self-Assessment of Competence on K3 (June 2000)

K3 Understanding of the value of inclusion, and the strategies and techniques for facilitating the inclusion of individuals with learning needs into various settings.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | (3) intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

I implemented strategies developed by team throughout school year. I had many opportunities to observe others implementing those strategies. After practice and feedback from colleagues, my skill level improved. I attended inservice training entitled "Practical Strategies for Including All Students"

Resources

Minnesota Paraprofessional Website

The Minnesota Paraprofessional Website (*ici2.umn.edu/para*) contains information on the following —

- Training opportunities and materials
- *ParaLink* newsletter on-line
- *Pockets of Excellence* profiles
- Guiding Principles
- Core and specialized competencies
- Paraprofessional resources and tools
- Paraprofessional chat room
- Links to related Websites

Speakers Network

A network of Minnesota experts is currently being developed to provide a resource for schools and districts to refer to for training needs. This network will provide consultants who are available to conduct training sessions throughout Minnesota on various topics related to the competencies for paraprofessionals and those who work with paraprofessionals. (See page 54 for contact information.)

Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium

The purpose of the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium is to coordinate various activities related to the support and enhancement of Minnesota's paraprofessional workforce. If you would like to become a consortium member, please send a letter of interest with recommendations to —

Barbara Jo Stahl
Minnesota Department of
Children, Families, & Learning
Suite F6
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113

Applications for membership are reviewed annually.

Pockets of Excellence

The Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium identifies schools or districts (through a nomination and selection process) that use exemplary strategies or practices for supporting, training, supervising, involving paraprofessionals in the planning process, and retaining paraprofessionals. The nomination and selection process is conducted annually. (See page 54 for contact information.)

ParaLink

ParaLink is a newsletter created for paraprofessionals and those who work with paraprofessionals. This newsletter provides up-to-date information on various issues concerning paraprofessionals in Minnesota, from upcoming training opportunities to changes in state and federal legislation. *ParaLink* is published two times per year, and is free. Please call to be added to the mailing list or access it on-line at the Minnesota Paraprofessional Website *ici2.umn.edu/para/*.

For more information on any of these resources, please contact —

Teri Wallace
Institute on Community Integration
University of Minnesota
111 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Drive S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

phone (612) 626-7220
FAX (612) 625-6619
walla001@umn.edu

References

American Occupational Therapy Association, Occupational Therapy Roles Task Force. (1993). Occupational therapy roles. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 47, 1087-99.

Blanchard, K. & Johnson, S. (1981). *The one minute manager*. New York: Berkley Books.

Clarke, L. (1994). *The essence of change*. Hemel Hempstead, England: Prentice-Hall International.

Crist, P. (1996). Roles, relationships, and career development (Chapter 11, pp. 327-391). *The occupational therapy manager*. (1996). Margo Johnson (Ed.). American Occupational Therapy Association, Bethesda, MD.

DePree, M. (1992). *Leadership jazz*. New York: Dell Publishing.

Kanter, R. M. (1983). *The change masters: Innovation and entrepreneurship in the American corporation*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Pickett, A. L. & Gerlach, K. (1997). *Supervising paraeducators in school settings: A team approach*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED, Inc.

Utermarck, J. (Ed.). (1998, Fall) Consortium has impact. *Paralink*, 4-6. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration.

Wallace, T. (1997). *The role of paraprofessionals in effective transition programs*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. Unpublished dissertation.

Webster's new collegiate dictionary. (1981). Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company.

Webster's new world dictionary. (1982). Second Concise Edition. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Wheatley, M. J. (1992). *Leadership and the new science: Learning about organizations from an orderly universe*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Appendix A

Core Competencies for Minnesota Paraprofessionals

The following competencies are expected of all paraprofessionals working in Minnesota schools. These were developed during the State Paraprofessional Retreat in January, 1998. They were based on the guiding principles for Minnesota Paraprofessionals.

K = Knowledge

S = Skill

Core Competency Statements		Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
1. Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundations of Special Education				
K1	A sensitivity to the beliefs, traditions, and values across cultures and the effect of the relationship among children, families, and schooling.	K1	x	
K2	Awareness of the human and legal rights and responsibilities of parents and children/youth as they relate to individual learning needs.	K2		x
K3	Understanding of the distinctions between roles and responsibilities of professionals, paraprofessionals, and support personnel.	K3	x	
K4	Understanding of the purposes and goals of education for all individuals.	K4		x
K5	Awareness of responsibilities in a manner consistent with the requirements of law, rules and regulations, and local district policies and procedures.	K5	x	
S1	Ability to carry out responsibilities in a manner consistent with the requirements of law, rules and regulations, and local district policies and procedures.	S1		x

Additions:

Core Competency Statements		Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
2. Characteristics of Learners				
K1 Awareness of the similarities and differences among the cognitive, communicative, physical, social, and emotional needs of individuals with and without exceptional learning needs.	K1			x
K2 Awareness of the effects that exceptional conditions have on an individual's life and family in the home, school, and community.	K2			x
K3 Awareness of characteristics and effects of the cultural, linguistic, and environmental background of the child and family.	K3			x
K4 Understanding of the effects of medications commonly prescribed for individuals with learning needs.	K4		x	
K5 Awareness of the educational implications of the above factors.	K5		x	
Additions:				
3. Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation				
K1 Awareness of district's ability to provide for and use the tools of assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation.	K1		x	
S1 Ability to make and document observations appropriate to the individual with learning needs, under the direction of a professional.	S1			x
S2 Ability to provide objective documentation of observations to appropriate professionals.	S2			x
Additions:				

Core Competency Statements		Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
4. Instructional Content and Practice				
K1 Awareness of learning styles of individuals.	K1			x
K2 Awareness of the demands and expectations of various learning environments.	K2			x
K3 Awareness of a variety of instructional and remedial methods, techniques, and materials.	K3			x
S1 Ability to establish and maintain rapport with learners.	S1			x
S2 Ability to use developmentally- and age-appropriate strategies, equipment, materials and technologies, as directed, to accomplish instructional objectives.	S2			x
S3 Ability to assist in adapting instructional strategies and materials according to the needs of the learner, under the direction of a professional.	S3			x
S4 Ability to follow written plans, seeking clarification as needed.	S4			x

Additions:

Core Competency Statements		Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
5. Supporting the Teaching and Learning Environment				
K1	Awareness of the environmental factors that affect teaching and learning, including health and safety issues.	K1	x	
K2	Awareness of the ways in which technology can assist teaching and learning.	K2		x
K3	Understanding of the value of inclusion, and the strategies for facilitating the inclusion of individuals with learning needs in various settings.	K3	x	
K4	Awareness by the paraprofessional of how they impact the overall learning environment for students and staff.	K4	x	
S1	Ability to assist in maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment that includes following prescribed policy and procedures (i.e. proper hand-washing technique, emergency evacuation, universal precautions, etc.).	S1	x	
S2	Ability to prepare and organize materials to support teaching and learning as directed.	S2		x
S3	Ability to use strategies that promote learner independence and positive self-esteem.	S3		x

Additions:

Core Competency Statements	Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
6. Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills			
K1 Understanding of applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of behaviors of individuals.	K1	x	
K2 Understanding of ethical considerations inherent in the management of behaviors.	K2	x	
K3 Awareness of the factors that influence the behavior of individuals with learning needs.	K3	x	
K4 Awareness of the social skills needed for current and future environments.	K4	x	
K5 Awareness of effective instructional practices that enhance the development of social skills.	K5	x	
K6 Awareness of the range and implications of management approaches/strategies that influence the behavior of individuals with learning needs.	K6	x	
K7 Understanding of the district/building behavior management plans for students.	K7	x	
S1 Demonstrate the use of effective strategies for the management of behaviors.	S1		x
S2 Ability to assist in modifying the learning environment to manage behavior.	S2		x
S3 Ability to collect and provide objective, accurate information to professionals, as appropriate.	S3		x
S4 Ability to use appropriate strategies and techniques in a variety of settings to assist in the development of social skills.	S4		x

Additions:

Core Competency Statements		Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
7. Communication and Collaborative Partnerships				
K1	Awareness of typical concerns of parents of individuals with learning needs.	K1	x	
K2	Awareness of the roles of individuals with learning needs, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school and community personnel in planning an individualized program.	K2	x	
S1	Use ethical practices for confidential communication about students with learning needs.	S1	x	
S2	Under the direction of a professional, use constructive strategies in working with individuals with learning needs, parents, and school and community personnel in various learning environments.	S2		x
S3	Follow the instructions of the professional.	S3	x	
S4	Foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and other school and community personnel.	S4		x
S5	Participate as requested in conferences with families or primary caregivers as members of the educational team.	S5		x

S6	Use appropriate educational terminology regarding students, roles, and instructional activities.	S6	x
S7	Demonstrate sensitivity to diversity in cultural heritage, lifestyles, and value systems among children, youth, and families.	S7	x
S8	Function in a manner that demonstrates the ability to use effective problem solving, engage in flexible thinking, employ appropriate conflict management techniques, and analyze one's own personal strengths and preferences.	S8	x

Additions:

Core Competency Statements		Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
8. Professionalism and Ethical Practices				
K1 Recognition of the paraprofessional as a positive role model for all students, including individuals with exceptional learning needs.	K1		x	
S1 Demonstrate commitment to assisting learners in achieving their highest potential.	S1	x		
S2 Function in a manner that demonstrates a positive regard for the distinctions among roles and responsibilities of paraprofessional, professional, and other support personnel.	S2		x	
S3 Function in a manner that demonstrates the ability to separate personal issues from one's responsibilities as a paraprofessional.	S3		x	
S4 Demonstrate respect for culture, religion, gender, and sexual orientation of students.	S4	x		
S5 Demonstrate a willingness to participate in on-going staff development, self-evaluation, and apply constructive feedback.	S5	x		
S6 Demonstrate proficiency in academic skills including oral and written communication.	S6	x		
S7 Practice within the context of written standards and policies of the school or agency where they are employed.	S7		x	

Additions:

These competencies were adapted from those generated by the Council for Exceptional Children in 1997, and revised during Minnesota's Paraprofessional Retreat in January, 1998.

Appendix B

Specialized Competencies for Minnesota Paraprofessionals

In addition to the core competencies, the following specialized competencies are expected of paraprofessionals working in specific positions (early childhood, transition to work, behavior management, academic program assistants, and physical/other health impairments). These were developed during the State Paraprofessional Retreat in January 1998, and were based on the Guiding Principles.

K = Knowledge

S = Skill

Specialized Competency Statements		Prior to employment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
1. Early Childhood, *Home Visitor Programs*				
K1 Understanding of his/her role as a member of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team responsible for developing service plans and education objectives for parents and their children.	K1			x
K2 Understanding of his/her role in listening and communicating with parents to gather information which the service delivery team can build on to meet the needs of the child and family.	K2	x		
K3 Awareness of health care providers, social services and other resources available in the community to assist parents and their child.	K3		x	
K4 Understanding of his/her role in enhancing parent interactions with their child by using and demonstrating effective techniques and materials to stimulate cognitive, physical, social, and language development.	K4		x	
Additions:				

Specialized Competency Statements		Prior to employ-ment screening	Within First 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
2. Early Childhood, *Center-Based Programs*				
K1 Awareness of basic developmental stages, ages 0-5.	K1		x	
K2 Understanding of his/her role as a member of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team responsible for developing and implementing service plans and education objectives for parents and their children.	K2			x
S1 Ability to use developmentally appropriate instructional interventions for curriculum activities in the areas of cognitive, motor, self-help, social/play, and language development for infants and young children ages 0-5.	S1			x
S2 Ability to gather information about the performance of individual children in all areas of development and to share it with professional colleagues.	S2		x	
S3 Demonstrate competence in preparing and using developmentally appropriate materials, under the direction of a professional.	S3		x	
S4 Demonstrate an understanding of the paraprofessional's role in communicating and working effectively with parents, other primary caregivers, and team members.	S4			x

Additions:

Specialized Competency Statements		Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
3. Transition to Work and Adult Life				
K1	Understanding of the need for transition-related services.	K1	x	
K2	Awareness of how to access information on community resources available to the individual with disabilities of transition age and his or her family.	K2	x	
K3	Understanding of the importance of interagency collaboration.	K3	x	
K4	Knowledge of the ethical and legal standards of conduct in relationships with students, parents, adult service providers, employers, and coworkers.	K4	x	
S1	Understanding of transition related assessment strategies and ability to provide team with information useful to the development of transition related goals and objectives.	S1		x
S2	Ability to facilitate and support student involvement in decision-making.	S2	x	
S3	Ability to identify and develop accommodations and natural supports in the work setting.	S3	x	
S4	Knowledge of and ability to provide instruction and support in leisure skills, social skills, self-determination skills, community mobility skills, and independent living skills.	S4		x
S5	Ability to provide instruction and support in work-related behaviors, job seeking skills, and job specific skills in school or at a community work site.	S5		x

Additions:

Specialized Competency Statements		Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
4. Behavior Management				
K1	Understanding of personality and social/emotional development.	K1	x	
K2	Understanding of behavioral/emotional challenges and the interaction with other disabilities.	K2	x	
K3	Understanding of the need for utilizing formal and informal assessment strategies in obtaining information necessary for educational and behavioral programming for individual students.	K3	x	
K4	Understanding of the rationale, components, operation, and evaluation of the program models in which they are working.	K4	x	
S1	Ability to document change in learner behavior in both academic and social areas.	S1	x	
S2	Ability to observe and record pupil behavior utilizing different social rating systems.	S2	x	
S3	Demonstrate the use of methods to change and maintain behavior.	S3	x	
S4	Ability to implement remedial techniques in academic skill areas with learners.	S4	x	
S5	Ability to use materials designed for skill development in the social areas.	S5		x
S6	Ability to collaborate effectively with team members.	S6		x

Additions:

Specialized Competency Statements	Prior to employ-ment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
5. Academic Program Assistants			
K1 Knowledge of the paraprofessional's role and function in the specific academic setting.	K1	x	
K2 Awareness of Minnesota Graduation Standards, including state testing and high standards as outlined in student IEPs.	K2	x	
K3 Awareness of factors which influence cognitive, social, emotional and physical development.	K3	x	
K4 Knowledge of educational terminology related to specific program or age level.	K4	x	
S1 Ability to instruct students in academic subjects using lesson plans and instructional strategies developed by teachers and other professional staff.	S1		x
S2 Ability to gather and record data about the performance and behavior of individual students.	S2	x	
S3 Ability to confer with special and general education practitioners about individual student schedules, instructional goals, progress, and performance.	S3	x	
S4 Ability to use developmental and age-appropriate instructional methods and reinforcement techniques.	S4		x

S5	Ability to effectively use available instructional resources including technology, as directed by the professional.	S5	x	
S6	Understanding of various learning styles and the ability to implement corresponding teaching methods.	S6		x
S7	Demonstrate the ability to implement techniques to include students in general education as outlined in IEPs.	S7		x

Additions:

Specialized Competency Statements		Prior to employment screening	Within first 2 weeks orientation	Within 45 school days
6. Physical and Other Health Impairments				
K1	Understanding of specific student environments and learning modification/ accommodation strategies.	K1	x	
K2	Understanding of medical conditions and emergency procedures for specific students, including seizures, latex allergies, catheterizations, tracheostomies, gastrostomies, ventilators, etc.	K2	x	
K3	Understanding of proper storage, documentation, administration and side effects of specific student medications (** note: specific training is required to administer medication).	K3	x	
K4	Awareness of specific student transportation issues and emergency evacuation procedures.	K4	x	
K5	Awareness of legal and liability issues specific to vulnerable and medically fragile students.	K5	x	
S1	Demonstrate competence in the use of proper body mechanics for self and specific student when transferring, lifting and positioning that student.	S1	x	
S2	Demonstrate competence in implementation, safety and maintenance of all necessary adaptive, assistive and instructional technology and equipment.	S2		x
S3	Demonstrate the ability to respond appropriately during an emergency situation, and certification in age appropriate CPR (infant/ child, adult) and Basic First Aid.	S3		x

S4	Ability to properly assist students with activities of daily living, including toileting, feeding, dressing and mobility.	S4	x
S5	Ability to implement strategies that encourage student independence and participation in all areas of development and classroom learning.	S5	x

Additions:

Appendix C

Paraprofessional Skills Inventory (Core)

Complete this form by considering your own ability to perform each core competency. Decide how well-prepared you are to complete each task/duty listed. Use the five-point scale to rate your level of competence by circling the number that best fits.

1 – Unprepared: you are unprepared to do the task and need training in order to begin.

2 – Beginner: you are doing the task but need further instruction to feel competent in this area.

3 – Intermediate: you are adequately prepared to do the task.

4 – Master: you are well-prepared and highly skilled to perform the task.

5 – Mentor: you are prepared to serve as a mentor to another paraprofessional or assist with training in this area.

In the space following each core competency, please describe your training and/or experience that is related to the competency identified (i.e., "attended one 2-hour training on working with diverse populations"; "worked as PCA for child with CP for 6 months"). On the final page of this inventory, please describe your training ideas to gain competency in the areas you rated 1=unprepared or 2=beginner.

Core Competency

1. Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundations of Special Education

K1 A sensitivity to the beliefs, traditions, and values across cultures and the effect of the relationships among children, families and schooling.

1	2	3	4	5
unprepared	beginner	intermediate	master	mentor

Training and Experience:

K2 Awareness of the human and legal rights and responsibilities of parents and youth as they relate to individual learning needs.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K3 Understanding the distinctions between roles and responsibilities of professionals, paraprofessionals and support personnel.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K4 Understanding the purposes and goals of education for all individuals.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K5 Awareness of responsibilities in a manner consistent with the requirements of law, rules and regulations, and local district policy and procedures.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S1 Ability to carry out responsibilities in a manner consistent with the requirements of law, rules and regulations, and local district policy and procedures.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

2. Characteristics of Learners

K1 Awareness of the similarities and differences among cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and communicative, needs of individuals with and without exceptional learning needs.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K2 Awareness of the effects that exceptional conditions have on an individual's life and family in the home, school, and community.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K3 Awareness of characteristics and effect of the cultural, linguistic and environmental background of the child and family.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K4 Understanding of the effect of medications commonly prescribed for individuals with learning needs.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K5 Awareness of the educational implications of all of the above characteristics of learners.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

3. Assessment, Diagnosis and Evaluation

K1 Awareness of district's ability to provide for and use the tools of assessment, diagnosis and evaluation.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S1 Ability to make and document observations appropriate to the individual with learning needs, under the direction of a professional.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S2 Ability to provide objective documentation of observations to appropriate professionals.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

4. Instructional Content and Practice

K1 Awareness of learning styles of individuals.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K2 Awareness of the demands and expectations of various learning environments.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K3 Awareness of a variety of instructional and remedial methods, techniques, and materials.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S1 Ability to establish and maintain rapport with learners.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S2 Ability to use developmentally and age-appropriate strategies, equipment, materials, and technologies, as directed, to accomplish instructional objectives.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S3 Ability to assist in adapting instructional strategies and materials according to the needs of the learner, under the direction of a professional.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S4 Ability to follow written plans, seeking clarification as needed.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

5. Supporting the Teaching and Learning Environment

K1 Awareness of the environmental factors that affect teaching and learning, including health and safety issues.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K2 Awareness of the ways in which technology can assist teaching and learning.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K3 Understanding of the value of inclusion, and the strategies and techniques for facilitating the inclusion of individuals with learning needs into various settings.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K4 Awareness by the paraprofessional of how they impact the overall learning environment for students and staff.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S1 Ability to assist in maintaining a safe, healthy, learning environment that includes following prescribed policy and procedures (i.e. proper hand washing technique, emergency evacuation, universal precautions, etc.).

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S2 Ability to prepare and organize materials to support teaching and learning as directed.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S3 Ability to use strategies that promote learner independence and positive self-esteem.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

6. Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills

K1 Understanding of applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of behaviors of individuals.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K2 Understanding of ethical considerations inherent in the management of behaviors.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K3 Awareness of the factors that influence the behavior of individuals with learning needs.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K4 Awareness of the social skills needed for current and future environments.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K5 Awareness of effective instructional practices that enhance the development of social skills.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K6 Awareness of the range and implications of management approaches/strategies that influence the behavior of individual's with learning needs.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K7 Understanding of the district/building behavior management plans for students.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S1 Demonstrate use of effective strategies for the management of behaviors.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S2 Ability to assist in modifying the learning environment to manage behavior.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S3 Ability to collect and provide objective, accurate information to professionals, as appropriate.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S4 Ability to use appropriate strategies and techniques in a variety of settings to assist in the development of social skills.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

7. Communication and Collaborative Partnerships

K1 Awareness of typical concerns of parents of individuals with learning needs.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K2 Awareness of the roles of individuals with learning needs, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school and community personnel in planning an individualized program.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S1 Use ethical practices for confidential communication about learners with learning needs.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S2 Under the direction of a professional, use constructive strategies in working with individuals with learning needs, parents, and school and community personnel in various learning environments.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S3 Follow the instructions of the professional.

1	2	3	4	5
unprepared	beginner	intermediate	master	mentor

Training and Experience:

S4 Foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and other school and community personnel.

1	2	3	4	5
unprepared	beginner	intermediate	master	mentor

Training and Experience:

S5 Participate as requested in conferences with families or primary caregivers as members of the educational team.

1	2	3	4	5
unprepared	beginner	intermediate	master	mentor

Training and Experience:

S6 Use appropriate educational terminology regarding students, roles, and instructional activities.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S7 Demonstrate sensitivity to diversity in cultural heritage, lifestyles, and value systems among children, youth, and families.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S8 Function in a manner that demonstrates the ability to use effective problem solving, engage in flexible thinking, employ appropriate conflict management techniques, and analyze one's own personal strengths and preferences.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

8. Professionalism and Ethical Practices

K1 Recognition of the paraprofessional as a positive role model for all students, including individuals with exceptional learning needs.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S1 Demonstrate commitment to assisting learners in achieving their highest potential.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S2 Function in a manner that demonstrates a positive regard for the distinctions among roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, professionals, and other support personnel.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S3 Function in a manner that demonstrates the ability to separate personal issues from one's responsibilities as a paraprofessional.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S4 Demonstrate respect for culture, religion, gender, and sexual orientation of students.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S5 Demonstrate a willingness to participate in ongoing staff development, self-evaluation, and apply constructive feedback.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S6 Demonstrate proficiency in academic skills including oral and written communication.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S7 Practice within the context of written standards and policies of the school or agency where they are employed.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

Training Ideas

Please use this format (core competency: training idea:) to describe your training ideas that could help increase competency in the areas you rated 1 or 2 (example: 5K2: on-site, hands-on training in computer lab to learn programs that students use). Use more pages as needed.

Appendix D

Paraprofessional Skills Inventory (Specialized)

Complete this form by considering your own ability to perform each core competency. Decide how well-prepared you are to complete each task/duty listed. Use the five-point scale to rate your level of competence by circling the number that best fits.

1 – Unprepared: you are unprepared to do the task and need training in order to begin.

2 – Beginner: you are doing the task but need further instruction to feel competent in this area.

3 – Intermediate: you are adequately prepared to do the task.

4 – Master: you are well-prepared and highly skilled to perform the task.

5 – Mentor: you are prepared to serve as a mentor to another paraprofessional or assist with training in this area.

In the space following each core competency, please describe your training and/or experience that is related to the competency identified (i.e., "attended one 2-hour training on working with diverse populations"; "worked as PCA for child with CP for 6 months"). On the final page of this inventory, please describe your training ideas to gain competency in the areas you rated.

Specialized Competency

1. Early Childhood, Home Visitor Programs

K1 Understanding of their role as a member of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team responsible for developing service plans and education objectives for parents and their children.

1	2	3	4	5
unprepared	beginner	intermediate	master	mentor

Training and Experience:

K2 Understanding of their role in listening and communicating with parents to gather information which the service delivery team can build on to meet the needs of the child and family.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K3 Awareness of health care providers, social services and other resources available in the community to assist parents and their child.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K4 Understanding of their role in enhancing parent interactions with their child by using and demonstrating effective techniques and materials to stimulate cognitive, physical, social and language development.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

1. Early Childhood, Center-Based Programs

K1 Awareness of basic developmental stages, ages 0-5.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

K2 Understanding of their role as a member of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team responsible for developing and implementing service plans and education objectives for parents and their children.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S1 Ability to use developmentally-appropriate instructional interventions for curriculum activities in the areas of cognitive, motor, self-help, social/play, and language development for infants and young children ages 0-5.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S2 Ability to gather information about the performance of individual children in all areas of development and to share it with professional colleagues.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S3 Demonstrate competence in preparing and using developmentally appropriate materials, under the direction of a professional.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S4 Demonstrate an understanding of the para-professional's role in communicating and working effectively with parents, other primary caregivers, and team members.

1 unprepared | 2 beginner | 3 intermediate | 4 master | 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S2 Ability to gather information about the performance of individual children in all areas of development and to share it with professional colleagues.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S3 Demonstrate competence in preparing and using developmentally appropriate materials, under the direction of a professional.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

S4 Demonstrate an understanding of the para-professional's role in communicating and working effectively with parents, other primary caregivers, and team members.

1 unprepared 2 beginner 3 intermediate 4 master 5 mentor

Training and Experience:

Training Ideas

Please use this format (core competency: training idea:) to describe your training ideas that could help increase competency in the areas you rated 1 or 2 (example: 5K2: on-site, hands-on training in computer lab to learn programs that students use). Use more pages as needed.

Appendix E

Support Assistant Work Plan Request

Rum River Special Education Cooperative

315 Seventh Lane NE, Cambridge, MN 55008 (612)689-3600
Serving Braham, Cambridge-Isanti, Isle, Milaca, Mora, Ogilvie, and Princeton

Date _____

Student _____

Grade _____ School _____

List of Team Members	Role	Present Yes	Present No

Date of Parent Permission for Placement _____

Document the need for a support assistant by answering the following questions —

What specific task(s) does the student need help with? _____

Note: When an IEP team is considering the need for a pupil support assistant, this request must be developed at the child study team meeting. The IEP manager must forward the form to the principal (with a copy of the IEP attached).

How frequently do these tasks occur? _____

_____

_____

Is there already someone in the building who can provide the services noted above (e.g., another paraprofessional, a student)? Please describe why or why not.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Indicate which student goal(s) from IEP will require a support assistant in order to be attained.

Goal # _____ Goal # _____

Goal # _____ Goal # _____

Describe the opportunities for the student to practice the goals independently without support assistant help.

_____

_____

_____

Describe the plan(s) for decreasing, discontinuing, or review of the use of a support assistant.

_____

_____

_____

Describe the plan for training the support assistant in helping the student to establish independence.

Who will be responsible to coordinate training?

Who will be responsible for supervision of the support assistant?

If the student requires support because of high frequency maladaptive behaviors, describe the structured behavior program to be used and the data collection procedures.

Describe the plan for backup.

Target date for student to function independently without support of the assistant.

Summary of Student Schedule

Student_____

Date_____ Grade_____

Please fill in class/subject for each half-hour block using the key

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 – 8:30					
8:30 – 9:00					
9:00 – 9:30					
9:30 –10:00					
10:00 –10:30					
10:30 –11:00					
11:00 –11:30					
11:30 –12:00					
12:00 –12:30					
12:30 – 1:00					
1:00 – 1:30					
1:30 – 2:00					
2:00 – 2:30					
2:30 – 3:00					

Key

Blue — Student is in independent class activity, no para in room

Green — Student is in independent class activity, para is in the room

Black — Student is in independent class but para checks at ____ minute intervals

Purple — Student is receiving one to one direct instruction within general education classroom

Red — Student is pulled out to receive instruction in a special education environment

* Indicates problem areas/have questions and concerns

Appendix F

Job Description Worksheet

Position title _____

Position setting _____

Hours of employment _____

Qualifications (credentials, education and/or work experience): _____

_____

_____

_____

Rationale and/or purpose for the position: _____

_____

_____

_____

Expectations of the position: _____

_____

_____

Duties and responsibilities: _____

_____

_____

Common activities: _____

_____

_____

Orientation/pre-training requirements: _____

_____

_____

On-the-job training goals: _____

_____

_____

Future training/inservice needs: _____

_____

_____

Supervision: _____

_____

_____

Name(s) of professional(s) directing this position and brief description of that relationship:

_____

_____

Schedule and structure of supervision (i.e. daily informal direction from lead teacher; weekly team meetings with educational team; annual performance review conducted in spring with lead teacher and program director):

_____

_____

Evaluation methods (i.e. observation in classroom; bi-monthly updates of paraprofessional skills inventory):

_____

_____

_____

Appendix G

Individualized Professional Development Plan

Use your completed Skills Inventory, current job description, performance feedback from supervisors and colleagues, interests, and career plan to identify necessary training areas. Describe the areas in which you have a need for knowledge, training, supervision or experience. Use this form to develop a comprehensive professional development plan. First, focus on those areas which are an essential function of your job. Once you have the competencies needed to meet the job expectations, move onto other areas of need. Use your strengths, personal interests and career plan to help guide your decisions in this process. Remember to update your Skills Inventory regularly so it reflects your current level of expertise.

Development area _____

Current competency level _____ Desired competency level _____ Competency level 6 months after training _____

Professional development activity	Person(s) responsible	Start date	Completion date

Ongoing plan for continued development

_____

Development area _____

Current competency level _____ Desired competency level _____ Competency level 6 months after training _____

Professional development activity	Person(s) responsible	Start date	Completion date

Ongoing plan for continued development

Development area _____

Current competency level _____ Desired competency level _____ Competency level 6 months after training _____

Professional development activity	Person(s) responsible	Start date	Completion date

Ongoing plan for continued development

_____

Development area _____

Current competency level _____ Desired competency level _____ Competency level 6 months after training _____

Professional development activity	Person(s) responsible	Start date	Completion date

Ongoing plan for continued development

_____